

12 Days of Christmas

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly.

Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics.

It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church.

Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

- The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
- Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.
- Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
- The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
- The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
- The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
- Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
- The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
- Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.
- The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.
- The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
- The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

So there is your history for today.

This knowledge was shared with me and I found it interesting and enlightening and now I know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol...so pass it on if you wish.'

Merry Christmas Everyone